

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for gathering flat articles (5) in stacks (9) of one or more articles (5) each, the method comprising the steps of:

conveying the stacks (9) being produced one after the other along a gathering route (1) in a stack conveyance direction and past at least one feed station, each stack lying against a supporting surface (7) of a stack support (2), wherein said stack supports (2) are not aligned parallel to the stack conveyance direction;

supplying articles (5) along a supply route (3) in a feed direction to the feed station;

inserting one of the flat articles (5) between each two successive stacks (9) or stack supports (2) respectively, wherein leading edges of the articles (5) are the first portions of the articles (5) to enter between two successive stacks (9) or stack supports (2); and,

positioning the inserted article on one of the two successive stacks (9) or supporting surfaces (7) of stack supports respectively, wherein the supply direction comprises a component parallel to the stack conveyance direction, and wherein the articles (5) are inserted between two successive stacks (9) or stack supports (2) while being gripped on their leading edges (5.1).

Claim 2 (Canceled)

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein each of the stack supports (2) comprises a stop ledge (8) at a bottom edge of the supporting surfaces (7), the articles (5) are inserted between the stacks (9) or the stack supports (2) from above, the gripped edges (5.1) are directed downwards and the articles (5) are released from being held when the gripped edge (5.1) is positioned immediately above the stop ledge (8).

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The method in accordance with claim 3, wherein the articles (5) are conveyed towards the feed station with their gripped edges (5.1) directed forwards and are positioned on the upstream stack (9) or on the upstream supporting surface (7), respectively.

Claim 5 (Withdrawn): The method according to claim 3, wherein the articles (5) are conveyed towards the feed station with their gripped edges (5.1) directed backwards and are positioned on the downstream stack (9) or on the downstream supporting surface (7), respectively.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method in accordance with claim 1, wherein, during insertion of the articles between the stacks (9) or stack supports (2), respectively, the gripped edges (5.1) are conveyed more rapidly or more slowly in the stack conveyance direction than the stack supports (2).

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 6, wherein the supporting surfaces (7) are positioned inclined or slanting relative to the gathering route (1) and wherein, during insertion of the articles between the stacks (9) or stack supports (2), respectively, the gripped edges (5.1) are conveyed in parallel to the supporting surface inclination.

Claim 8 (Withdrawn): The method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the articles (5) are conveyed towards the feed station in a suspended manner and are inserted between the stacks (9) or stack supports (2), respectively, from below, the gripped edges (5.1) being directed upwards.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the articles (5) are conveyed towards the feed station with their gripped edge (5.1) oriented towards one side and wherein the articles are inserted sideways between the stacks (9) or stack supports (2), respectively.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): An arrangement for gathering flat articles (5),

the arrangement comprising:

a plurality of stack supports (2) ~~and a plurality of holding elements (4)~~, each of the plurality of stack supports (2) comprising a supporting surface (7) and being conveyed one behind the other in a stack conveyance direction along a gathering route (1) past at least one feed station, said supporting surfaces (7) not being aligned parallel to the direction of the gathering route (1).

a plurality of holding elements (4), each of the plurality of holding elements (4) being equipped for held supply of one flat article (5) to the feed station and each of the holding elements (4) being conveyed one after the other in a supply direction along a supply route (3) towards the gathering route (1) and in the feed station, being deactivated for releasing the article (5),

wherein the supply direction comprises a component parallel to the stack conveyance direction,

wherein the supply route (3) traverses the gathering route (1) at the feed station,

wherein conveyance of the stack supports (2) and the holding elements (4) are matched to one another such that, at the feed station, one holding element (4) is conveyed between every pair of successive stack supports (2), and

wherein the device further comprises means for deactivating the holding elements (4) during their conveyance between the stack supports.

Claim 11 (Canceled)

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The arrangement according to claim 10, wherein the stack supports (2) are arranged on at least one first conveying organ (30) and the holding elements (4) are arranged on at least one second conveying organ (31), and wherein the conveying organs (30, 31) are arranged in planes parallel to one another at least in the area of the feed station.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The arrangement in accordance with claim 10, wherein the supporting surfaces (7) comprise lower and upper edges aligned transverse to the gathering route (1) and lateral edges aligned inclined relative to the gathering route (1), as well as stop ledges (8) located on the lower edge.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The arrangement according to claim 13, wherein the supply route (3) traverses the gathering route (1) from above to below and the means for deactivating the holding elements (4) is arranged such that the holding elements (4) are deactivated when positioned in a lower zone of the stack supports (2).

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): The arrangement in accordance with claim 13, wherein the supply route (3) traverses the gathering route (1) from below to above and the means for deactivating the holding elements (4) is arranged such that the holding elements (4) are deactivated when positioned in an upper zone of the stack supports (2).

Claim 16 (Withdrawn): The arrangement according to claim 15, wherein a second stop ledge (8') is provided in the upper zone of each supporting surface.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): The arrangement in accordance with claim 13, wherein the supply route (3) traverses the gathering route (1) from a first side of the stack supports (2) to a second, opposite side and the means for deactivating the holding elements (4) is arranged such that the holding elements (4) are deactivated when positioned in a zone of the second, opposite side of the stack supports (2).

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): The arrangement according to claim 12, wherein the stack supports (2) are arranged laterally on a first conveying organ (30), the holding elements (4) are arranged laterally on a second conveying organ (31), and the first and second conveying organs (30 and 31) are arranged such that the holding elements (4) and the stack supports (2) pass in combing manner through one another in the traversing area.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The arrangement in accordance with claim 18, wherein the stop ledges (8) of the stack supports (2) comprise passages (33) for the holding elements (4).

Claim 20 (Currently Amended): The arrangement according to claim 12, wherein each of the stack supports (2) comprises two stack support parts (2.1, 2.2) arranged at a distance from one another transverse to the gathering route (1), each of the two stack support parts being arranged on one of two first conveying organs (30.1 and 30.2), and the holding elements (4) and the second conveying organ (31) are arranged to pass in the a traversing zone between the stack support parts (2.1, 2.2).

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The arrangement in accordance with claim 12, wherein each of the holding elements (4) comprises two holding element parts (4.1 and 4.2) distanced from each other transverse to the gathering route (1), each holding element part being arranged on one of two second conveying organs (31.1 and 31.2), and the stack supports (2) and the first conveying organ (30) are arranged between the holding element parts (4.1 and 4.2).

Claim 22 (Presently Presented): The arrangement according to claim 10, wherein the stack supports (2) are V-shaped compartments (20) arranged transverse to the gathering route (1) and comprising side walls arranged one behind the other in the stack conveyance direction and a floor joining the side walls, wherein one of the side walls serves as supporting surface (7) and the floor as stop ledge (8), and wherein the other side wall (21) is capable of taking over the function of the next upstream or downstream stack support (2).